course designed to replicate lunar ground conditions in 4 minutes and 25 seconds.

These students represent America's next generation of scientists, mathematicians, and engineers. I have no doubts that their ingenuity, creativity, and dedication to discovery will result in creative solutions to many of the challenges America faces after they leave the University of Evansville. Congratulations!

SEWAGE CRISIS NOW ADDED TO THE HUMANITARIAN DEBACLE IN GAZA

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, since late January 2008, the 1.5 million person population in Gaza has been enduring an Israeli-imposed blockade. The blockade effectively restricts the entry of food, clean water, fuel, and medical supplies. The lack of basic goods has severely deteriorated Gaza's health, economy, and social fabric.

The World Bank reports that since Hamas ousted Fatah from Gaza last June, 90 percent of businesses have shut down costing workers more than 100,000 jobs. Due to the closure of Gaza's borders and its inability to import raw materials, farmers and businesses are unable to produce and export their goods leaving nearly half a million people without an income.

According to Oxfam, today 80 percent of Gaza's population is dependent on food aid. On April 24th, the United Nations, UN, announced the suspension of their food aid program to 650,000 Gazans, 56 percent of whom are children, due to a lack of fuel for their trucks. These restrictions exacerbate an already dire humanitarian crisis in which 17.5 percent of children under the age of five suffer from chronic malnutrition.

Water and wastewater systems have also become a casualty of the blockade. Gaza's water and wastewater system is heavily reliant on diesel-powered generators. Due to the restrictions on the entry of diesel into Gaza, many water pumps do not have the power to provide running water. Additionally, the sewage system dates back to 1967 and was meant to provide for a population one-third the size of Gaza's Population. The lack of clean water and an adequate sewage system has led to a sanitary water crisis in Gaza.

According to a recent UN publication, seventy-five percent of Gaza's drinking water is polluted. The lack of clean water and a proper sewage system has caused infestations of small organisms such as amoeba that have led to several ailments including abdominal colic, diarrhea, and constipation. The sewage crisis has also led to overflow. On March 27, 2007, a wall of human waste overflowed into Gaza's residential areas and caused the death of children and elderly people.

According to the United Relief Works Agency, UNRWA, ''Gaza is on the threshold of becoming the first territory to be intentionally reduced to a state of abject destitution, with the knowledge, acquiescence and, some would say, encouragement of the international community.''

Israel must protect its citizens and ensure their security, but pursuant to the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel also has a legal duty to provide Gazans with food, clean water, electricity, and medical care. I urge the U.S. Administration to help end the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and ensure the health, safety, and security for Palestinians and Israelis.

NEW BRIDGING INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT TOUGH HI-TECH RESEARCH ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY (BIG THREE) ACT OF 2008

HON. JOE KNOLLENBERG

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the New Bridging Industry and Government Through Hi-Tech Research on Energy Efficiency (BIG THREE) Act of 2008. This important legislation is a bold step to foster innovation, create and retain high-paying jobs, and promote efficient and alternative fuel technology to ensure that automakers meet the increased Corporate Average Fuel Economy, CAFE, standards.

It is impossible to overlook the importance of the automotive industry to the U.S. economy. Our history and our heritage as a nation are deeply rooted in the automotive industry, which has greatly improved the quality of life in our time. Nearly 400,000 Americans jobs are provided directly by the automotive industry on assembly lines, in research facilities, and offices across the country. Additionally, approximately 3.5 million other jobs are supported by the automotive industry through parts suppliers, hospitals, schools, and police stations that serve them. That means that every automotive job equals nearly 9 other jobs for U.S. workers.

It is also impossible to ignore the current struggles of the automotive industry. When Congress enacted energy legislation that increased CAFE standards to 35 miles per gallon by 2020, it placed the burden of cost on the auto industry to meet the aggressive efficiency targets. Increased CAFE standards represent only the latest hurdle thrown at the automotive industry from Washington, with little help delivered to assist the industry's pursuit of higher efficiency and lower emissions. During a time of an economic slowdown, Washington should take steps to protect these valuable jobs, not jeopardize them.

CAFE will cost the domestic automotive industry an estimated $85 billion to research, develop, and implement the efficient and alternative fuel technology required to meet the aggressive new standards. For an industry that already spends approximately $16 billion per year on research and development, finding the extra funds to develop this technology without compromising drivers' safety will be extremely difficult. This means that the increased costs will have to be passed on to the consumer, with some estimating that it will cost an extra $6,000 per car to meet CAFE standards.

Instead of throwing the automotive industry up the creek without a paddle,

Washington should play a part in increasing energy efficiency. Energy security is an issue of national security and must be addressed over the short term and the long term. This requires a comprehensive strategy and steadfast dedication to meet our goal.

That is why I have introduced this legislation, which will help automakers meet the new regulations, help make our country a leader in alternative fuel technologies, and help stimulate our slowing national economy. Michigan's economy has been in unique and deep trouble for some time.

The first step in my plan is to permanently extend the research and development tax credit at 20 percent and make it fully refundable for expenditures that help meet the new CAFE standards. Automakers and suppliers have not been able to take advantage of the tax credit because they have not made substantial profits in recent years. Allowing an industry that currently invests significant funding in advanced research and development to take advantage of the tax credit will help defray the costs of increased research and development. This will enable them to reinvest these funds and create more high-paying jobs in the U.S.

The New BIG THREE Act will also invest significant Federal funding in research and development of leap-ahead technologies that will help us meet the new CAFE standards. Advanced battery technology is one of the most promising ways to dramatically increase fuel efficiency. However, there is no domestic production of advanced battery technology that is applicable to vehicles. By investing $750 million over 5 years to research and develop advanced battery technology, my bill will help ensure that America is the epicenter of hybrid and plug-in electric vehicles that will help reduce our dependence on oil.

Hydrogen fuel cell technology has always been regarded as the long-term goal of extremely low-emission transportation. The New BIG THREE Act will invest $250 million over 5 years to install hydrogen fuel pumps in commercial gas stations in at least two pilot regions. By establishing a hydrogen infrastructure, we can promote use of currently available hydrogen vehicles and provide an incentive to produce more of these leap-ahead vehicles. The New BIG THREE Act will also invest $150 million over 3 years for the Federal Government to purchase hydrogen vehicles in order to reduce the emissions of our fleets and demonstrate the viability of the technology.

The New BIG THREE Act also has a provision that will affect short-term efforts to increase fuel efficiency. Clean diesel technology is one of the best ways to reduce emissions in the short term, and utilizing biodiesel is a promising way to reduce our dependence on Middle East oil. However, not all current biodiesel blends are compatible with all biodiesel engines. My bill will direct the Environmental Protection Agency to make a harmonized national standard for biodiesel composition.

Finally, my comprehensive plan will establish the Interagency Group on CAFE Standards, which will make sure Federal agencies work together and that all money spent on auto-related projects is used wisely and most effectively.

Ultimately, my plan is about jobs and our economy. The New BIG THREE Act is about working with one of our most important industries to create and retain good jobs, allow the industry to be competitive in the global market, and help move to a cleaner and more efficient line of American cars. The strong position of the Federal Government created by CAFE on